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public work until 1852, when he became an assistant of Mr. James Wall in his great palæontological explorations of New York. From this time to his death he was steadily occupied in that class of governmental researches that forms so large a part of our American scientific work. In the palæontological studies of the surveys in New York, Missouri, Illinois, and Ohio, he had a large share; and in all of them has raised for himself monuments to his painstaking researches. His most important work, however, was done in connection with the government surveys of the Territories. This work was begun as an assistant of Mr. Hall in the study of the then Territory of Nebraska. The principal results of this labor were published by this Academy in Vol. V. of its *Memoirs*, 1855. The last twenty years of his life he was a resident of Washington, and continually engaged in the study of the rich faunæ of invertebrate life from the districts beyond the Mississippi. His reports on the invertebrate life of these districts, measured by any standard, are to be ranked with the labors of the first palæontologists in the world. The very week of his death, the writer of this notice received the last and greatest of his works, — a report on the invertebrate cretaceous and tertiary fossils of the upper Missouri country, — a quarto volume of between six and seven hundred pages of text and nearly fifty plates. This work alone would prove the fit basis of a great reputation. It shows him to have carried his admirable powers, the unwavering fidelity, the patient courage, which he had borne through forty years of bodily weakness, unshaken to his end.

The peculiar seclusion in which Mr. Meek's life had been passed will not serve to make his loss so quickly felt as that of many another student of nature. But, though he passes from us leaving behind few connected with him by intimate friendships or even close acquaintance, there are few names in the history of American science so sure of a place for the time to come.

#### ADMIRAL CHARLES WILKES.

THIS distinguished officer entered the navy in 1818, as a midshipman. In 1826, he was made a lieutenant; in 1843, commander; in 1855, captain; in 1862, commodore; and in 1866, rear-admiral. His first cruise was up the Mediterranean; the next on the west coast of South America, under Commodore Stewart. In 1836, he surveyed, in the "Porpoise," George's Bank, off Massachusetts; and, in 1837, Tybee Bar, at the mouth of the Savannah River. In 1838, he was selected by President Van Buren to command the South Sea Exploring Expe-

dition, which sailed from Norfolk, August 19 of that year, and returned to the United States, June 10, 1842. Many valuable contributions to science, geography, and general physics resulted from this expedition. The Antarctic Continent was discovered Jan. 19, 1840; and several islands, reefs, and shoals, before unknown, were placed on the charts. In 1861, he relieved Commodore Dornin on the coast of Africa, and took command of the "San Jacinto;" and with her captured the Rebel commissioners, Mason and Slidell, who were found on board of the British mail-steamer "Trent." In July, 1862, he took command of the James River flotilla, — a large number of vessels, — and served on that station until the Federal troops were removed from Harrison Landing, September of the same year. He was immediately ordered to the command of the flying squadron, and sailed without delay for the West Indies, where his squadron did valuable service, capturing many vessels, until June, 1863, when he was ordered home. This was his last sea service.

At an early age he exhibited a remarkable taste for scientific pursuits, especially astronomy and geodesy. In 1830, he took charge of the Department of Charts and Instruments, at Washington, — a new bureau. Under his supervision, a small observatory (the first) was established at Washington in 1833, when the first astronomical observations, under the auspices of the government, were taken by him, with fixed instruments. In 1835, he erected on his own property, Capitol Hill, a small observatory, which was used by the government for several years. In 1837, he was sent to Europe to purchase instruments for the South Sea Exploring Expedition, then fitting out under command of Commodore Ap Catsby Jones, a duty he was peculiarly fitted for.

Admiral Wilkes was the author of several valuable works. The narrative of the exploring expedition — five large quarto volumes and atlas — was written by him. All the charts of the exploring expedition were constructed under his supervision, comprising two large folio atlases. He wrote the hydrography of the exploring expedition, Vol. XXIII. of the series, — a large quarto volume, — and produced a quarto volume of the meteorological observations made during the voyage, — Vol. XI. of the series of exploring expedition works. He also published works on "Western America," the "Theory of the Winds," "Circulation of the Ocean," and "Zodiacal Light." He was, with others, appointed by the Secretary of the Navy to examine the iron, coal, and timber regions of the Deep River District, N. C., and made an interesting report thereon, which was published by Congress in

1858. The twenty-fourth volume of the results of the exploring expedition, "General Physics," was prepared by him (nearly ready for the press), but was never published, although money was appropriated by Congress for that purpose. It was to contain moon culminations for longitude; transit observations of the sun and stars, for error and rate of astronomical clock; reduced rates of clock or chronometer, by transit of stars, &c., &c.; pendulum observations—not the least valuable those made on Mauna Loa, Hawaii; magnetic observations for variation, dip, and intensity; tides, heights, and a variety of subjects, principally the result of his own observation and experience.

Admiral Wilkes was emphatically a hard worker, never idle; and his efforts in behalf of science were fully appreciated and acknowledged by many learned societies, as were also his nautical achievements. He was made the recipient (1848) of a splendid gold medal, awarded by the Royal Geographical Society of London, in acknowledgment of his discovery of the Antarctic Continent. In 1862, the merchants and citizens of Boston presented him with an elegant sword, and he was complimented with honorary membership in several scientific associations in this country and abroad.

It is worthy of note, that Admiral Wilkes, but a few days after the registering telegraph of Professor Morse was put in operation between Washington and Baltimore, in 1844, by a series of observations, having a well-rated chronometer at each end of the line, determined the difference of longitude between the two cities.

#### ALEXANDER BRAUN.

ALEXANDER BRAUN, one of the ablest botanists of our day, died at Berlin, on the 29th of March last, after a short illness. He was born at Ratisbon, May 10, 1805, and therefore had not quite completed his 72d year. In his childhood the family removed to Carlsruhe, where his father took an appointment in the postal service, and at length became postmaster-general of the Grand-Duchy of Baden. Just fifty years ago, Braun was a student at the University of Heidelberg with Agassiz, Carl Schimper, and Engelmann as intimate companions. Our associate, Dr. Engelmann, is now the sole survivor. Braun, Schimper, and Agassiz soon went to Munich, where Oken, Schelling, Döllinger, and Martius (just returned from Brazil) were teaching: but the party, Schimper excepted, was again united at Paris in 1832. The alliance with Agassiz was cemented by the marriage of the latter to Braun's sister.